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March 21, 2005 LB 121

Natural Resources, advanced to General File. I do have committee amendments, Mr. President. (AM0046, Legislative Journal page 357.)

PRESIDENT SHEEHY: Thank you. Senator Louden, you're recognized to open.

SENATOR LOUDEN: Thank you, Lieutenant Governor and members of the body. LB 121 would allow discounted hunting and fishing permits for members of the military who are deployed out of state for more than half the period covered by the permit. The discounted fee would be \$5, which is the same amount currently charged to replace a lost permit. To qualify for the discounted permit, a person would have to meet the following: be a resident of Nebraska; provide proof of purchase of the original permit; and provide proof of deployment out of state for more than half the period covered by the original permit. I introduced LB 121 after it was brought to my attention by a constituent that people who are serving in the Nebraska National Guard and Reserves are subject to much longer periods of deployment than they were before the war in Iraq. These longer deployments create many hardships for Nebraska members of the armed forces. I know that our military members willingly make these sacrifices, and that they knew when they signed up that they would be sent out of state for duty. However, when they return to the state, employers and the community try to help with their return to civilian life. LB 121 is an attempt to help with that return. Currently, if someone loses a permit, he or she can replace it for \$5 with proof of purchase. A permit entitles the holder to a benefit. In the situation that the subject...is the subject of LB 121, the benefit is lost. I think that is reasonable, to treat those lost benefits in a way that is similar to the way that we treat a lost permit. LB 121 came out of the Natural Resources Committee with a vote of 7 in support and 1 absent. It received favorable comments at its hearing, including the support of Game and Parks Commission, which rarely supports proposals that reduce the cost of permits. The fiscal note for the bill estimates that the relevant Game and Parks cash fund will lose around \$8,700 per year if half of all eligible persons use the discounted permit. However, this doesn't take into account that the bill would increase the